

AgWG Meeting Summary

USFWS Annapolis Office

July 19, 2012

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- Introductions
- Meeting Minutes: motion by VA, second NGO-approved
- NRCS Representatives
- CBP Director
- Panel Updates
 - NMP status report being finalized
 - CC status report being developed
 - CT status report being developed
 - PLS data collection review

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- Panel Updates cont.
 - Review process with AgWG discussed
 - Separate efforts being implemented- how do these relate to the AgWG panels? We are staying in touch with these groups where known to ensure that communication paths are open and will utilize these separate efforts where appropriate
 - Panels are structured similarly but differences where appropriate due to topic, partners involved, etc.
 - Discussion on MAWP manure marketing/transport study and report that is expected later this year- expect to supplement the future AgWG panel on this topic but is not expected to duplicate or replace the panel efforts
 - The PLS is expecting to receive data from all Bay states except for NY

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- Verification Review Process
 - Summary of past work
 - Matrix review comments
 - Reach out to experts and scientific experts on the verification process
 - Values in matrix need to be based on documentation with scientific rigor and will be used as reference to support the interim draft matrix and supporting proposal
 - September 12th due date for AgWG to provide interim draft matrix and documentation to the BMP Verification SC
 - Now working with Tt to assist in identifying reference documentation to support the development of the matrix values
 - Draft matrix and documentation will be reviewed and approved by the AgWG before being presented to the BMP Verification SC, the Review Panel, the WQGIT, the MB and up to the PSC

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- Matrix Review cont.
 - Discussion on historical data tracking and verification issue- how does this relate to the matrix approach and values
 - Non-CS and contract expired program BMPs have been attached to this verification discussion
 - Concerns with resources that may be needed to work on verification of historical BMP data
- NGO Comments
 - Most vs. all C/S BMPs have verification in place- examples do exist where C/S programs may not have a complete verification process in place; e.g. more than contract implementation but also confidence in change of impact
 - Relative values vs. number of confidence and credit- we need to move forward to develop improved representative values
 - Historic data verification

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- Matrix Comments
 - Involvement of agricultural groups- would like to see more representation at the discussions to provide their input- discussion on how the AgWG may provide directed communication to these groups
 - Frank: commitment to specifically outreach to the partnership and agricultural community after AgWG develops a more complete document (interim draft) ACTION ITEM
 - Lunch Break

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- Matrix Comments

- State Comments

- NY: USC- questioning the review time spent on various levels of protocols- should accept verification from farmer/agency sources at full credit value and instead direct resources towards BMP implementation
 - Will be a need for assessment for statistical sampling but uneasy with the confidence range values- will need a qualified person
 - Records review process question on why included as a separate protocol- should be a part of the on-farm assessment
 - On matrix, farmer self assessment category number 1, confidence value should be changed to 5/5 rather than 4/5.

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- State Comments cont.
 - NY- Farmers complete reports with USDA that could be included in protocols
 - USC- need a variety of tools to collect data; need as many tools as possible and for full credit if NY reports it
 - USC- time required to complete this task is needed vs. current schedule
 - USC- acknowledge that qualifications of the reporting person should not be a component of the confidence level and credit-remove from protocol defined levels
 - PA- supports USC comments as well
 - Supports the discussion and development process, but do not support discounting process
 - Understand how the values were developed but feel that the values should be developed through a scientific process

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- State Comments cont.
 - PA- Sept. 12th date is not realistic; need to work with Tt and develop realistic values in last two columns
 - PA can not support matrix without values completed in the columns- a blank check
 - Resources should be directed towards BMP implementation vs. verification; concerned that all available resources in PA could be redirected towards verification- a misdirection of resources
 - Extend the date for finalization past Sept. 12th to
 - Make sure the AgWG has the time to review the Tt results
 - Need a practicable protocol to improve verification with multiple options

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- State Comments cont.
 - Multiple places for possible error on data- will not have perfect data no matter what the process
 - Scientific term is not realistic; overstated or misstated term for verification protocols
 - MD- taking the high end of verification for full credit
 - Trying to make sure all data will be accepted
 - DE- agencies believe that already counting practices through USDA, CDs and CAFO permitting
 - Cost is an issue, but not an issue for DE since a small state and area in the watershed
 - UD- most of work occurring within programs; will address if they find otherwise
 - WV- in addition to previous comments; matrix provides options for states to review- keep as many options on the protocol as possible

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- State Comments cont.
 - Historic BMPs and who is responsible for tracking and verification (USDA BMPs) is critical
 - Non-CS BMPs are a voluntary process- cannot require assessments
 - View the MD Howard Co pilot as a good example of voluntary approaches
 - Seek more experienced and scientific experts to assist the workgroup in developing the matrix
 - Number of agronomic practices in USDA data bases may not have been reported to the CBP and may not fit into the current BMPs- animal waste management structures in particular
 - VA- NGO- concern that can verify practices like CC are not identified in NRCS CPs as a performance standard- some of practices as reported have no good idea of performance levels- example of grass waterways that narrow or shift over time

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- State Comments cont.
 - Will only know if they are performing correctly if someone visits the practices- acknowledge cost
 - VA State-concur with PA comments
 - Issue with voluntary BMPS- what is the incentive to report them and considering what the values are in the models and the time required to assess them- differences between long term vs. short term BMPs
 - Diversity of opinions by farmers of what BMPs are and how they are performing- value in data consistency
- NGO Comments cont.
 - AFT- appreciated presentation comments and support equality across all sectors
 - Various levels of confidence on what agriculture is actually doing- are we making a good case to the non-ag community on what ag is doing- some are saying ag is not doing enough

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- NGO Comments cont.
 - AFT- respect for what the partners are saying as to the costs for implementation of verification
 - Need for scientific rigor for protocols to demonstrate to other stakeholders that data is reliable
 - private sector is using protocols with confidence levels- possible cheaper alternatives and lessons learned
 - Appreciate the point that when agencies report and document a BMP, we should accept it
 - MD- requests that the matrix reflect a protocol level for regulatory BMPs- this can be added as a separate protocol level
- Protocol Development
 - Steve Dressing Tt discussed proposal to assist the workgroup with data confidence values and references
 - Coordinate efforts with Tt assistance to PA on this topic to ensure consistent

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- Matrix Development cont.
 - Tt already beginning search in literature and known sources- request experienced contacts from workgroup
 - Work plan will be reflective of the workgroup's timetable vs. the BMP Verification Steering Committee by request of the AgWG Chair
 - CBC-will information search be based existing matrix or will look for information of other protocols that will provide higher confidence levels- Tt will complete search and will not base only on current matrix definitions but will provide all information found
 - PA- recommends that we develop scientifically defensible protocols and then assign full value vs. partial values not matter what the approach
 - VA- utilize review panel experts to assist Tt and the workgroup determine statistically valid protocols
 - NGO- asked PA if there would be a different level of validity depending on the verification approach- PA feels that it depends on BMP as to the validity; where valid one could exceed another approach (e.g. remote sensing vs. on-farm assessments).
 - USC- agrees that higher levels of confidence may not be that different than lesser forms and the difference is not cost effective

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- Matrix Development cont.
 - NY- costs will likely be redirected by CS programs at the detriment for implementation- could impact in meeting the partnerships goals for milestones and WIPs with EPA oversight concerns
 - Verification process is important to get this right the first time for the partners to make the correct decisions on where to place resources
 - EPA denoted that funding is available from CBRAP to support these efforts which is in addition to the implementation grants
 - MD- NASS has expertise in these decisions and may be able to assist in literature review- Barbara in MD NASS
 - USC- looking at data error already in the model, maybe should reduce the levels of verification to a simple 3-4 options for full credit
 - NGO- need to advance on both fronts- a better model to handle data and improve the quality of the data
 - MD- states need to be able to track the data as well
 - NY- existing funds are not sufficient to meet the higher levels of verification being proposed; even EPA CBRAP
 - PA- current accuracy in the model should not require the verification protocols being proposed- should not expect the higher levels of protocols for full credit- not needed to match model accuracy for the resources needed